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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Safety Information

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Office of the Chairman
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The National Transportation Safety Board today released the following statement by Chairman Joseph J. O'Connell, Jr.

The NTSB investigation of the August 14 Los Angeles Airways helicopter crash in Compton, California, has revealed that one of the five main rotor blades separated in flight. The Board has found strong evidence of a metal fatigue type failure of the blade spindle assembly.

The Safety Board is continuing its investigation to determine the cause of the fatigue failure. The failed parts have been forwarded to a metallurgical laboratory for detailed testing under Board supervision.

The identical part for the Los Angeles Airways helicopter which crashed last May 22 in Paramount, California, did not suffer fatigue failure as did the part in the Compton crash. However, the Safety Board is scrutinizing all of the facts so far developed in both investigations.

Based on its preliminary findings in the Compton crash investigation, the Safety Board today is recommending to the Federal Aviation Administrator that he (1) require an immediate fleet inspection of all Sikorsky S-61 helicopter spindle units; (2) adopt a more precise and frequent inspection to preclude future spindle unit failures; and (3) study the need for establishing a retirement life for this vital part.

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